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WATCHING THE WEATHER WITH UNCLE SAM

U. S. Department of Agriculture

The fourth of a series of ten talks by Welby R. Stevens, assistant forecaster, United States Department of Agriculture, delivered through Station WRC and 32 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, January 9, 1930 at 1:10 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

We shall tell you now about the organization of the forecast service which is the subject of the fourth talk of this series on weather forecasting.

As was emphasized last Monday, speed is a very important factor in weather predicting and the forecast work has been organized so as to give rapid and efficient public service.

To meet this need the United States has been divided into five districts. Within each district there is a certain station called the district center where the forecasts are issued for the entire district. These five centers are Washington, Chicago, New Orleans, Denver and San Francisco. There are also centers for limited and special service at Juneau, Alaska, San Juan, Porto Rico and Honolulu.

As soon as the forecast is completed for a certain State it is telegraphed immediately to every Weather Bureau station within that State. At practically every station there is a local forecaster, who amplifies the State forecast to meet local needs. In winter, for instance, he makes a forecast of the lowest temperature for the following night, or in summer, the highest temperature for the next day. These men must be thoroughly familiar with local topography and its effect on the weather in their vicinity. They must also keep in touch with local industries and their needs. For example, forecasts of wind and temperature are furnished by the local forecaster to a certain State School of Agriculture. These forecasts are used in regulating an incubator having a capacity of 7000 eggs, and are particularly valuable when high easterly winds are indicated, as the difficulty in heating with such winds is greatly increased.

When a cold wave is approaching the local forecast officials immediately advise those most concerned and see that the warning is given wide distribution. Greenhouses are closed and boilers fired. Preparations are made at once by heating and lighting plants to meet the increased demands that are certain to follow. Natural gas companies turn a larger amount of gas into their lines to provide for increased consumption. Merchants curtail advertisements or direct attention to cold-weather articles. Charity organizations prepare to meet increased demands for food and fuel, and thus minimize suffering among the poor.

In addition to the regular forecast service there are a number of special services such as fruit-frost and raisin drying in California, harvest weather, fruit spraying, shippers, forest fire and aviation. Lack of time prevents us from telling you any of the details of these services at this time, but in a later series of talks it may be possible to do so.

On next Monday we shall tell you about the preparation of the charts from which the forecasts are made.

